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MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 24 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to refer to the letter dated 12 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/53/828-S/1999/150). I refer in particular to the fourth paragraph of the letter, which was spuriously circulated under the agenda item concerning measures to eliminate international terrorism. In that regard, I should like to clarify the following points:

1. The Syrian Arab Republic condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal because they are directed against the lives and property of innocent persons and violate national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Syria also calls for genuine cooperation among all States within the framework of international legitimacy in taking the necessary steps to prevent terrorism and to combat and eliminate its causes.

2. The Syrian Arab Republic has called for the establishment of internationally agreed standards that clearly distinguish between terrorism, which must be condemned and combated, and legitimate national struggles against foreign occupation, which must be supported. Syria was the first to call for the convening of an international conference to define terrorism, to examine its hidden causes, to prevent confusion between terrorism and the struggle of peoples for liberation from foreign occupation, and to study the underlying causes of acts of violence that may arise as the result of the violation of the fundamental rights of peoples, and also as a result of misery, frustration, a sense of injustice, and despair.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

3. Nothing in United Nations resolutions can undermine in any way the right to self-determination, freedom, independence and the liberation of territory from foreign occupation, since all of these rights are contained in the Charter of the United Nations. Nor is there anything that can detract from the right of peoples to engage in a legitimate struggle to that end and to seek and receive support in accordance with the principles of the Charter, the Declaration on the Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

4. The terrorism that must be vigorously condemned rather is the State terrorism perpetrated by Israel against the Lebanese people, the people of Palestine and Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel's record in Lebanon is replete with criminal acts of terrorism, including, for example, the Qana massacre. Israel has never ceased to carry out acts of terrorism in order to achieve its goals of expansionism, hegemony and terrorization of the Arab people with a view to expelling them from their lands and replacing them with its own settlers, in defiance of the norms of international law and, in particular, the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

5. Finally, the Israeli letter seeks to portray the Israeli State's acts of piracy, aggression, expansionism and terrorism as acts of legitimate self-defence and this at a time when the peoples of the world have come to regard State terrorism as one of the most dangerous forms of terrorism and, indeed, occupation and settlement as the most horrendous forms of terrorism. In this respect, international efforts should be redoubled to combat and put an end to such terrorism.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mikhail WEHBE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative